



# India Khasi Hills

Yearly report 2020



# Supporting Khasi communities to regenerate their forest

Meghalaya state, India



**2020 was a challenging year for everybody, and the Khasi Hills project was no exception. While the team were able to distribute facemasks to the 12 municipalities, field visits could only resume in June, following strict safety protocols.**

The socio-economic team was unable to go ahead with programmes involving visits from people from the Mushroom Development Centre, as the Government of Meghalaya had put strict travel regulations in place due to Covid-19, and training in livestock was also affected.

As the year progressed, inter-district travel was less restricted, and by September, permits were no longer needed for travel within the state. It had been difficult for some self-help groups to sell their products during the lockdown and to obtain supplies such as mushroom spores for production, but during the second half of the year the team was able to better assist farmers and self-help groups with supplies. The team delivered hundreds of fruit trees to beneficiaries in the project's new extension area, the Ri-Bhoi district, and with the help of Community Facilitators and village Headmen, the team spread news of how the project could support local self-help groups there.

Despite the setbacks and challenges of 2020, the project was still able to meet its restoration goals for planting, tree management (silviculture) and making firebreaks. Tree planting also continued into the second half of the year, as did regular mapping and monitoring activities. Training took place within the project area on data collection of rainfall, assessment of self-help groups, youth volunteers and efficient cookstove monitoring; thankfully the team and members could work outdoors instead of in a confined space.

Lockdown also had some unexpectedly positive outcomes for new and innovative projects in the self help groups. One gentleman who experienced a reduction in sales at the onset of the lockdown used his time to construct a building for his sewing business, which is a great investment and will aid him in future production.

## 2020 in PICTURES



# 2020 in NUMBERS

With the KSKHAWUM Welfare Society, WeForest is supporting traditionally forest-dependent villages in the east and north Khasi Hills to restore their forests. This community project manages tree nurseries, carries out thinning and weeding, and establishes natural firebreaks to protect the forest.



## Tree planting

The tree planting programme started in **23** villages.

**58,895** tree saplings were planted.

**50,000** of these were raised in the home-based nurseries of self-help groups and individuals.

Tree planting took place in 25 ha of assisted natural regeneration (**16 ha** in the original project area and **9 ha** in the new extension area to the north).

**81** species were planted.

**9676** saplings were transplanted from the forest.

## Restoration

**299 ha** of land (representing **261,027** trees) was mapped to bring under assisted natural regeneration (ANR).

**43 ha** (representing **3139** trees) in the existing project area was tended and managed.

## Livelihoods

**59** villages were involved in the project, including **9** in Ri-Bhoi.

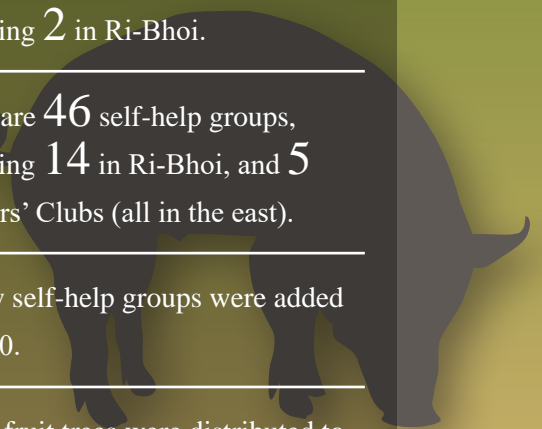
They belong to **12** Hima (municipalities of several villages), including **2** in Ri-Bhoi.

There are **46** self-help groups, including **14** in Ri-Bhoi, and **5** Farmers' Clubs (all in the east).

**3** new self-help groups were added in 2020.

**500** fruit trees were distributed to **48** beneficiaries.

More than **300** liquid propane gas stoves were distributed.







## Management and mapping

The new year means the dry season, and in the East Khasi Hills the villagers managed their regeneration plots by weeding, pruning and thinning for better tree growth. In the new Ri-Bhoi area, 299 ha of assisted natural regeneration (261,027 trees) were mapped with the Community Facilitators, Assistant Community Facilitators and staff after receiving the green light from the villages.



## Rainfall tells an important story

In May, the four rainfall stations were renovated to protect the collection points from any disturbance and to make them more durable. Rainfall and infiltration data was collected throughout the year at the newly renovated stations to assess how the regenerating forest and its soil is changing. Volunteers also received orientation on data reading and recording.

## Learning about livelihoods

Awareness programmes for 15 new or potential self-help groups in the new Ri-Bhoi district were held in June. New incomes for families help to reduce pressure on the forest.

JAN

ANR

Firelines

Livelihoods (all year)

Data collection (all yr)

FEB

MAR

APR

Supplementary planting

Perm. plot surveying

Nursery monitoring

MAY

Supplementary planting

Perm. plot surveying

Nursery monitoring

JUN

Supplementary planting

Perm. plot surveying

## Participatory rural appraisals

PRA sessions took place in several villages in the East Khasi Hills in February and March. PRA is used to incorporate the knowledge and opinions of rural people in planning and managing development projects and programmes. The sessions aimed to better understand the communities and where resources were being used, and to assess if they were being used efficiently. Some suggestions were for more follow up on projects that had been implemented, and to mobilize the people better in order to build capacity.



## Tree planting

68,571 saplings were planted in 23 villages between June and September, involving the whole community with the assistance of the facilitators, and youth volunteers. Nearly 50,000 out of 58,895 saplings were acquired from the home-based nurseries of self-help groups and individuals, and 9676 more were transplanted from the forest.

The Forestry Team also trained Ri-Bhoi's new Assistant Community Facilitator in collecting GPS coordinates and mapping the areas for restoration, as well as training the residents in tree planting.





## Forest-friendly stoves

The socio-economic team made monitoring visits to recipients of fuel-efficient cooking stoves. 70% had already used up and refilled the liquid propane gas, which reduces fuelwood consumption and has a much better carbon footprint than charcoal and firewood, as well as practically no negative impact on health or local forests. 52 stoves had been distributed to households in the Ri-Bhoi area in June, and a further 249 beneficiaries received new connections by the end of the year.



## Raising pigs

Pigs are better for the forest than grazing cattle, because you can raise them at home. In 2020 the Persara Self-Help Group sold 3 fattened pigs, and the Myntoilang group from sold two pigs in May. The income is split, with some going into the group account, some given to members as pay for taking care of the pigs, and the rest being spent on pig feed!

## Ending the year with a bang

The 5th Annual Self-Help Group Meet and Fest attracted 88 people, including many dignitaries. There were awards for best performing self-help groups, Farmer's Clubs, firefighters and animal rescuers. The many successes of the year were celebrated, and inspiring speeches looked forward to the year ahead.



JUL

Suppl. planting

Nursery setup

Monitoring saplings



## Fruit trees distributed in the new extension area

500 fruit tree saplings from the home-based nursery in Palwi village, including Assam lemon, litchi, pomegranate and mango, were distributed to 48 recipients, including self-help groups and individuals in four villages within the Ri-Bhoi district. The saplings were monitored in follow up visits from the end of July onwards by the community facilitator. Protected from animals by bamboo fencing, all the trees were reported to be in good condition.

AUG

Suppl. planting

Nursery setup

Monitoring saplings

SEP

Suppl. planting

Nursery setup

Monitoring saplings

OCT

Infiltration data measurement

Perm. plot surveying



## Creating firebreaks

Once the monsoon is over, firebreaks are established to protect the regenerating areas. This continues through the winter, as fires are normally more prevalent in the dry season. The soil at the firebreak must be exposed, without any plant material or dry litter that could provide fuel to a fire. In this way, communities are able to better protect forests from fire which may spread from areas outside the project area. In 2020, 12 firebreaks were created, covering a total distance of 39 km.

NOV

Infiltration data measurement

Perm. plot surveying

DEC

Infiltration data measurement

Perm. plot surveying



# What's next?



## Forestry

- Awareness programmes for new villages in the extension area.
- Meeting the target of a final 350 ha (305,550 trees) brought under assisted natural regeneration management by local communities.
- Mapping the land, stove distribution, firebreaks, silviculture, plot making and rainfall data collection.



## Livelihoods

- Orientation programmes for self-help groups in the new Ri-Bhoi district.
- Training on mushroom cultivation, and participatory rural appraisal in new villages.
- Distribution of poultry, pigs and fruit trees to individuals and self-help groups.

## How do we know our restored forests are growing and making an impact?

Every hectare under restoration is mapped with GPS points to generate polygons (areas on a map) that are assigned to sponsors. Permanent monitoring plots are established in our sites and our forestry and science teams conduct surveys to monitor progress of biomass growth, tree density, survival rate and species diversity, among other indicators. Where social impacts are also critical, we measure socio-economic indicators such as the number of beneficiaries, people trained, and income generated from forest-friendly livelihood activities.

Please visit our **Why and How** webpage for more information.



Stay up-to-date with your interactive **Khasi Hills map**, and check out the **photo album** on Flickr.